CHECK YOUR JUDGES
Your voting guide to Cook County’s 2022 judicial primary elections

InjusticeWatch
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Roadmap to the races

All primary races are on the Democratic ballot unless otherwise noted. For subcircuits, voters will see only those contests on their ballot for the subcircuit in which they reside.

### APPELLATE COURT
2 vacancies

- Hall vacancy
  - Russell “Russ” Hartigan
  - Dominique C. Ross
  - Debra B. Walker

- Harris vacancy
  - Raymond W. Mitchell
  - Devlin Joseph Schoop
  - John H. Ehrlich

Candidate profiles start on Page 3

### COUNTYWIDE CIRCUIT COURT
10 vacancies

- Brennan vacancy
  - Howard B. Brookins, Jr.
  - Ubi O. O’Neal
  - Lisa Michelle Taylor

- Callahan Jr. vacancy
  - Mary Bernadette McMahon
  - Suzanne Therese McEneeley
  - Tracie Porter

- Cannon vacancy
  - Diana López
  - Monica G. Somerville
  - Mable Taylor

- Hyman vacancy
  - Thomas E. Nowinski
  - Carmen Migdalia Quinones

- Ingram vacancy
  - Elizabeth “Beth” Ryan
  - Yolanda Harris Sayre

- Leeming vacancy
  - Rena Marie Van Tine
  - Wende Williams

- Lynch vacancy
  - Deidre Baumann
  - Paul Joyce
  - Michael Weaver

- McGury vacancy
  - Ruth Isabel Gudino
  - Chelsey Renece Robinson

- O’Brien vacancy
  - Araceli R. De La Cruz
  - Jacqueline Marie Griffin
  - Dan Balanoff

- Sullivan vacancy
  - Thomas More Donnelly
  - Claudia Silva-Hernandez
  - Meridith Vanae Hammer

Candidate profiles start on Page 4

### SUBCIRCUIT COURT
17 vacancies

- 1st: Johnson vacancy
  - Maria M. Barlow
  - John W. Wilson

- 4th: Gavin vacancy
  - Nick Kantas
  - Amanda Moira Pillsbury

- 5th: Portman-Brown vacancy
  - David L. Kelly
  - Jenetia Marshall

- 6th: Araujo vacancy
  - Charles “Charlie” Beach
    (unopposed)

- 7th: Martin vacancy
  - Marcia O’Brien Conway
  - Owens “Joe” Shelby

- 8th: Gordon vacancy
  - Pat Casey
  - Bradley R. Trowbridge
  - John Fritchey

- 9th: Cleveland vacancy
  - Sanjay Tailor
  - Ann Buran-Vongher

- 11th: McGuire vacancy
  - Chris Taliaferro
  - Aileen Bhandari

- 13th: Groebner vacancy (Republican)
  - Christine Svenson
  - Gary William Seyring
  - Dominic J Buttitta, Jr

- 13th: Groebner vacancy (Dem)
  - James “Jack” Costello
  - Joe Gump

- 14th: Brown vacancy
  - Iris Y. Chavira
    (unopposed)

- 14th: Jagielski vacancy
  - Steve Demitro
  - Viviana Martinez
  - Jorge V. Cazares

- 15th: Lawler vacancy
  - Bernadette Barrett
  - Jim Gleffe

Candidate profiles start on Page 8

WHAT TO KNOW

This year’s Illinois primary elections are on June 28.

Early voting in Chicago’s 50 wards and sites in suburban Cook County starts June 13. To find your polling place:

- City residents: www.chicagoelections.gov
- Suburban Cook County residents: www.cookcountyclerklil.gov/elections

Who can vote?

Voters must be at least 18 years old, a U.S. citizen, and reside in their precinct for at least 30 days prior to Election Day. People with felony convictions can vote in Illinois as long as they are not serving a felony sentence in prison or jail.

▼ For more information about each candidate and to locate your subcircuit, scan the QR code or visit injusticewatch.org/judges.
Why you should check your judges

Judicial candidates might be among the most obscure names on your ballot, but these elections come with high stakes. Judges are powerful officials whose choices on the bench touch many aspects of life, from traffic tickets to divorces, lawsuits, evictions, and criminal cases. They have the power to take someone’s freedom, enforce or overturn state laws, and correct or perpetuate injustices. Yet there are few places to get information about the people running for judge. That’s why Injustice Watch created this guide to judicial candidates running in Cook County’s primary elections on June 28, 2022.

Illinois voters elect judges every two years. This year, 75 candidates are running for 29 judicial vacancies in Cook County. Every voter will get to choose candidates to fill two appellate court seats and 10 circuit court seats. You may also have one or two subspecialty races on your ballot depending on where you live. Judges elected from subspecialties have the same responsibilities as other circuit court judges, but only people who live in that subspecialty can vote for them.

Our team spent months researching the candidates’ legal experience, community involvement, donors, political connections, conduct, and controversies. We sent every candidate a survey asking why they deserve your vote. And we collected recommendations from 13 bar associations, groups of lawyers who interview and rate candidates.

A condensed version of our findings, edited for space and clarity, appears here. For more detailed candidate profiles, visit injusticewatch.org/judges.

Understanding the candidate icons

Current or former public defender: This candidate has served as a public defender, representing clients in criminal court who can’t afford a private attorney.
Current or former prosecutor: This candidate has served as prosecutor in criminal or quasi-criminal (such as traffic court) cases at the city, county, state, or federal level.
Appointed judge: When a judicial vacancy opens at any level, the Illinois Supreme Court appoints someone to fill the seat until after the next election. Candidates with this icon were appointed to the court at some point.
Democratic Party pick: The Cook County Democratic Party endorses candidates for appellate court and countywide circuit court seats but not for subspecialty seats.

Past controversy: The candidate has been involved in some kind of personal or professional controversy.
Highly qualified ratings: Two or more bar associations have rated this candidate highly qualified or recommended. Not all bar associations give out ratings higher than qualified. But those that do have suggested that this candidate is particularly well-suited to be a judge.
Negative ratings: At least two bar associations have said this candidate is not recommended or not qualified to be a judge. Candidates who don’t participate in the ratings process are automatically rated as not recommended. For complete bar association ratings, visit injusticewatch.org/judges.

About the endorsers

This guide includes endorsements, available by press time, from labor groups and other political organizations that have a defined process for endorsing judicial candidates. We exclude endorsements from individual politicians or community leaders.

Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL): An umbrella organization of more than 300 local labor unions in Chicago and Cook County.
Independent Voters of Illinois-Independent Precinct Organization (IVI-IPO): A nonprofit, independent political organization focused on voter education, voter registration, and candidate endorsements.
Personal PAC: An abortion-rights political organization focused on ensuring access to abortion in Illinois.

Russell “Russ” Hartigan

Experience:
Goldstine, Skrodzki, Russian, Nemec and Hoff, Ltd.
• Partner (2017-present): Serves as a mediator and practices civil litigation.

Cook County Circuit Court

Various law firms
• Partner (1981-2010): Operated firm with different partners through the years, defending municipalities in lawsuits, handling worker’s compensation and personal injury cases, and serving as a mediator and arbitrator.

Notable: Hartigan resigned from the circuit court in 2017 due to an illness in his family. He ran unsuccessfully for circuit judge again in 2020 and applied to be an associate judge in 2021 but was not selected. Hartigan has also served numerous stints as an elected official in several suburban Cook County communities, including Lyons Township, where he’s a former township supervisor, school board member and trustee, and Western Springs, where he served on the zoning board and is also a former village board trustee.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or above by all bar groups and highly recommended or highly qualified by two.

Debra B. Walker

Experience: Cook County Circuit Court
• Circuit judge (2008-present): Currently serves in the domestic relations division presiding over divorce cases.

Clausen Miller, P.C.
• Partner (1996-2008): Represented professionals accused of malpractice and judges accused of misconduct by the Judicial Inquiry Board.
Brydges, Riseborough, Peterson, Franke and Morris
• Senior associate (1993-1996)

Notable: Before going to law school, Walker was a certified public accountant. Walker is a former chair of the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism, which conducts training for lawyers and judges.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by five bar associations and highly qualified or highly recommended by four. The other evaluations were not available by press time.

Endorsements: IVI-IPO, Personal PAC
Raymond W. Mitchell

**Experience:**
Cook County Circuit Court  
- Circuit judge (2008-present): Hears cases in the chancery division, where people bring lawsuits asking a judge to order something to happen. Previously presided over trials in civil lawsuits over business disputes.

**Winston and Strawn LLP**  

**Notable:** Last year, in a lawsuit filed by the Fraternal Order of Police, Mitchell ruled that the City of Chicago had to negotiate its Covid-19 vaccine mandate for city employees with the police union through arbitration, halting the mandate for police officers covered by the union. An arbitrator ultimately upheld the vaccine mandate. In 2018, Mitchell dismissed a lawsuit filed against the City of Chicago by two residents over the city’s water pipe modernization program. The residents claimed the city’s work to replace water mains and meters had caused lead to enter their water and that the city had failed to properly notify residents of the danger. Mitchell’s decision was upheld by the Illinois Supreme Court.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or recommended by six bar associations and highly qualified or highly recommended by four others by press time.

**Endorsements:** CFL, Personal PAC

Devlin Joseph Schoop

**Experience:**  
The Cochran Firm Chicago  
- Partner (2019-present): Represents plaintiffs in civil rights, police misconduct, and catastrophic personal injury cases.  
- City of Chicago Law Department  
  - Assistant corporation counsel (2017-2019): Represented the city and police officers in misconduct cases.

**Cook County Circuit Court**  
- Circuit judge (2015-2016): Appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court. Heard traffic cases and later child abuse and neglect cases.

**Notable:** Schoop ran unsuccessfully for circuit judge in 2016 and 2018. He currently represents a group of Black City of Chicago Water Department employees who are suing the city for alleged discrimination and a hostile work environment. The lawsuit was filed in 2017, shortly before the city’s inspector general released a report that found supervisors in the department exchanged racist, sexist, and homophobic emails. In 2014, Cook County Chief Judge Tim Evans appointed Schoop’s then-firm, Laner Muchin, to investigate allegations of corruption and abuse at the county’s probation department. Schoop played a leading role in the investigation, and shortly after, the Illinois Supreme Court appointed him as a judge. Schoop represented the City of Chicago in a civil lawsuit filed by the family of Alfordish Cockerham, who was killed in 2014 by officer Anthony Babish. A jury awarded the family $1.3 million.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or recommended by eight bar associations by press time. The Hellenic Bar Association found him not recommended, and the Illinois State Bar Association found him not qualified.

**Endorsements:** Personal PAC

John H. Ehrlich

**Experience:**  
Cook County Circuit Court  
- Circuit judge (2012-present): Hears pre-trial motions for civil lawsuits in the law division. Previously presided over foreclosure and traffic court cases.

**City of Chicago Law Department**  
- Deputy corporation counsel, torts division (2008-2012): Represented the city in wrongful death and personal injury cases.

**Assistant corporation counsel and chief assistant corporation counsel, torts division (1995-2008)**

**Notable:** In 2017, Ehrlich dismissed several combined lawsuits filed by 53 former NFL players against helmet manufacturer Riddell. Ehrlich said the players failed to file their suit within the two-year statute of limitations. The appeals court upheld his decision.

If elected, Ehrlich says he would be the first LGBTQ+ appellate court judge in the state.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or recommended by six bar associations. The Women’s Bar Association of Illinois and the Chicago Bar Association found him highly qualified. The Illinois State Bar Association found him not qualified.

**Endorsements:** IVI-IPO, Personal PAC

Howard B. Brookins, Jr.

**Experience:**  
Chicago City Council  

**Law Office of Howard B. Brookins, Jr.**  
- Attorney in private practice (1990-present): Focused on criminal defense, estate, personal injury and contract dispute cases.

**Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office**  
- Assistant state’s attorney (1989-1990)

**Cook County Public Defender’s Office**  

**Notable:** Brookins ran unsuccessfully for Cook County state’s attorney in 2008 and the U.S. House in 2016. As an alderperson, Brookins pushed for years to get Wal-Mart to build a store in his ward and voted against an ordinance that would have mandated a higher minimum wage at big-box stores. He previously chaired the council’s Black Caucus. In 2006, he called on the City Council to stop paying to represent disgraced former police Cmdr. Jon Burge in lawsuits related to his torture of Black men in the 1980s and ’90s. In 2016, his former chief of staff pleaded guilty to accepting a $7,500 bribe to help arrange a letter of support for a liquor license for a business owner who turned out to be an FBI informant. Brookins was not charged with wrongdoing. In 2020, the Chicago Board of Ethics fined Brookins $5,000, saying that he could be paid for his work and improperly communicated with a client who was represented by another attorney. In an email, O’Neal said, “Censure reflects that the violation was not so serious (as) to warrant a sanction, as a result, censure does not affect the ability of a lawyer to continue to practice law.”

**Bar association ratings:** Did not participate in the evaluation process.

Lisa Michelle Taylor

**Experience:**  
Schwartz Gilligan  
- Associate (2017-present): Represents defendants in car accidents and other cases involving injuries or insurance claims.

**Henderson Parks, LLC**  

**Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith LLP**  
- Partner (2005-2017): Represented defendants in medical and nursing home negligence, car accident, and other civil lawsuits.

**Pretzel & Stouffer**  

**Worker, Sitko & Hoffman, LLC**  

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations.
Mary Bernadette McMahon

Experience:
Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
• Assistant state’s attorney (2005-present): Supervises all of the prosecutors and oversees felony and misdemeanor cases at the Skokie courthouse. Previously was a deputy supervisor at the Rolling Meadows courthouse and prosecuted felony cases.

Notable: McMahon hails from the wealthy and politically connected family that owns McMahon Food Corp., a dairy distribution company. In the early 2000s, the company held lucrative contracts to distribute milk to Chicago Public Schools, the Cook County Jail, and the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, according to a 2012 Chicago Sun-Times/Better Government Association investigation. In a statement, McMahon said she previously owned shares of the company but divested from it in 2007. McMahon’s cousin, Joseph Birkett, is an Illinois appellate judge and former DuPage County state’s attorney. Her sister, Frances McMahon Kushner, is also an assistant Cook County state’s attorney.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by seven bar associations and highly qualified by the Chicago Bar Association. The other evaluations were not available by press time.

Endorsements: CFL

Suzanne Therese McEneeley

Experience:
Cook County Public Defender’s Office
• Assistant public defender (2002-present): Has worked in a variety of roles within the office, including the abuse and neglect division, the domestic violence division, and the criminal division.

Notable: McEneeley ran unsuccessfully for judge in 2020. She does not have a current campaign website or a visible social media presence.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or above by all and highly recommended by Chicago’s LGBTQ+ Bar Association.

Endorsements: Personal PAC

Tracie Porter

Experience:
Cook County Circuit Court
• Circuit judge (2021-present): Appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court. Serves in the traffic division.

Law Office of Tracie R. Porter

Various law schools in Chicago, St. Louis, and California
• Law professor (2004-2021): Taught courses, including legal research and writing, real estate law, and trusts and estates.

Brown Udell & Pomerantz, Ltd.
• Associate (2003-2004): Focused on real estate transactions and litigation.

Barnes & Thornburg
• Associate (2000-2003): Focused on commercial real estate leases and sales.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or above by all and highly qualified or highly recommended by four bar associations.

Monica G. Somerville

Experience:
City of Chicago Department of Finance
• Deputy director of citation administration and accounts receivable (2018-2021): Oversaw the division that resolves ticket disputes and works with outside vendors who collect ticket debt for the city.

Chicago City Council Finance Committee

Illinois Department of Employment Security
• Supervising administrative law judge (2009-2013): Supervised eight administrative law judges hearing unemployment benefits appeals.


U.S. Postal Service Law Department
• Attorney (2007-2009): Represented the postal service in employment discrimination cases.

City of Chicago Law Department

Notable: Somerville applied to be an associate judge in 2021 but was not selected. From 2013 to 2017, Somerville helped run the city’s workers’ compensation program, which was operated for decades by Ald. Ed Burke’s finance committee, until federal prosecutors charged him with racketeering, extortion, and attempted bribery in 2019 (that case is still ongoing). Within weeks, the mayor commissioned an audit of the prior two years of the program, including the last year Somerville was the director, and the City Council voted to move the program under the city’s Finance Department. The audit found that the program did not have measures in place to detect or prevent fraud, that data collected about workers’ compensation claims was incomplete and disorganized, and that claims were not reviewed or processed according to best practices. Somerville said she would not comment about a “pending investigation and/or litigation.”

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by 11 bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association found her not qualified, and the Women’s Bar Association of Illinois found her not recommended.

Endorsements: IVI-IPO

Mable Taylor

Experience:
Law Office of Mable Taylor
• Attorney in private practice: Focuses on criminal defense, personal injury, employment law, family law, and real estate, among other types of cases.

Cook County Mandatory Arbitration Program*
• Arbitrator: Heard civil cases over small amounts of money in a program aimed to divert cases before trials.

*Injustice Watch could not verify the dates of employment, and Taylor did not provide additional information.


Bar association ratings: Found not qualified or not recommended by six bar associations. The Black Women Lawyers’ Association of Greater Chicago found her recommended. Others were not available by press time.
Thomas E. Nowinski

**Experience:**
- Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County
- Chief of staff (2020-present): Oversees office’s operations and strategy.
- Cook County Recorder of Deeds
- Cook County Assessor’s Office
- Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
- Assistant state’s attorney (2014-2017; 2004-2012): Started by prosecuting criminal cases. Later moved to the civil side of the office, representing the county in employment, civil rights, and other civil lawsuits, and ultimately serving as a supervisor.
- Cook County Department of Human Resources
- Deputy director of labor relations (2012-2014): Negotiated union contracts and represented the county in labor disputes.

**Notable:** Nowinski’s father, also named Thomas E. Nowinski, was a Cook County circuit judge from 1991 to 2004. His sister, Christina Nowinski Wurst, is the co-founder of a consulting firm that has worked for Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, and Ald. Howard Brookins Jr. (21st Ward), who is also running for judge this year. While at the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office, Nowinski represented the office in a civil lawsuit brought by the mother of David Koschman, who was killed by Richard J. Vanecko, a nephew of former Mayor Richard M. Daley. The suit alleged a cover-up of the incident and botching of the investigation.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations.

**Endorsements:** CFL, Personal PAC

Carmen Migdalia Quinones

**Experience:**
- Law Offices of Carmen M. Quinones
- Attorney in private practice (1989-present): Focused primarily on family law. Also serves as a Guardian ad Litem, or child representative, in domestic relations cases.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated not qualified or not recommended by eight bar associations.

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Elizabeth “Beth” Ryan

**Experience:**
- The Law Office of Elizabeth C. Ryan
- Trial attorney (2011-present): Private practice focused on personal injury cases.
- Newman, Boyer & Statham
- Circuit Court of Cook County

**Notable:** Ryan ran unsuccessfully for judge in 2020.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations.

**Endorsements:** Personal PAC

Yolanda Harris Sayre

**Experience:**
- Illinois State Police
- Legal counsel (2021-present): Represents the state police in employment cases, consults with the Illinois Attorney General’s Office on litigation involving the state police.
- Illinois Secretary of State’s Office
- Cook County Board of Elections
- Administrative law judge (2010-2020): Presided over cases involving ballot petition challenges.
- Chicago Board of Elections
- Administrative law judge (2010-2018): Presided over cases involving ballot petition challenges.
- Chicago Police Department

**Notable:** Sayre testified for the state at former Chicago police officer Jason Van Dyke’s murder trial about the use-of-force training she led at the police academy. Van Dyke’s attorney said Sayre was likely Van Dyke’s instructor, but Sayre said she couldn’t recall him specifically.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or above by eleven bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association rated her not qualified.

**Endorsements:** CFL, Personal PAC

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Rena Marie Van Tine

**Experience:**
- Cook County Circuit Court
- Circuit judge (2021-present): Appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court in February 2021. Hears civil jury trials with damages of $50,000 or more.
- Associate judge (2001-2021): Heard civil jury trials and child protection cases.
- Illinois State Comptroller’s Office
- Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
- Assistant state’s attorney (1987-1999): Tried felony cases in the criminal division and represented the county in medical malpractice lawsuits.

**Notable:** Van Tine was the first female Indian American state court judge in the country when she was selected as an associate judge in 2001, according to the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association.

Van Tine was the judge in a civil lawsuit filed against the City of Chicago by the family of Quintonio LeGrier, who was killed by Chicago police officer Robert Rialmo in 2015. The jury in the case awarded LeGrier’s family $1.05 million, but Van Tine overturned the jury’s verdict based on a “special interrogatory” they signed saying that Rialmo was in reasonable fear of great bodily injury or death. Interrogatories are written questions about the facts of a case that any party in a lawsuit may ask a jury to answer separately from their verdict. The legal maneuver, commonly used in civil trials, has been criticized for confusing juries.

In a statement, Van Tine said, “As a trial court judge, I am required to apply the law whether or not I agree with it. The law at the time of the LeGrier case required judges to give special interrogatories requested by any party and prohibited judges from tipping off a jury about how a response to an interrogatory could affect a verdict.” She noted that the case was not appealed and the Illinois legislature has since changed the rules to allow judges to explain to jurors how their votes on special interrogatories might affect the verdict.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or above by all and highly qualified or highly recommended by seven bar associations.

**Endorsements:** CFL, Personal PAC

Wende Williams

**Experience:**
- DeLoach Law Office
- Attorney in private practice*: Focused on criminal defense, personal injury, and child support cases.

**Notable:** Williams ran unsuccessfully for judge in 2020 as Wendelin “Wendi” DeLoach. Williams, who used to practice law in Colorado, had her law license there suspended for 30 days in 1997 for representing a client in a murder case when she had previously represented a co-defendant in a separate matter. She used her prior relationship to visit the co-defendant several times in jail without his lawyer’s knowledge or approval. She later acknowledged that her client and the co-defendant had competing interests because her client was offered a plea deal in exchange for testimony against the co-defendant.

**Bar association ratings:** Did not participate in the evaluation process.

*Injustice Watch could not verify her dates of employment, and the candidate did not respond to requests for comment.*
In 2009, Baumann represented families of people buried at Burr Oak Cemetery, a historically Black cemetery in Alsip, in a class-action lawsuit where workers had allegedly emptied graves in an attempt to resell the plots. The lawsuit was settled, but because the cemetery had filed for bankruptcy, most families received very little compensation. Baumann did not respond to a request for comment.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or above by most bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association rated her not qualified, and the Chicago Bar Association rated her not recommended.

Endorsements: IVI-IPO, Personal PAC

Experience:
Baumann & Shuldiner
• Partner (2001-present): Focused on civil rights, police misconduct, personal injury, and employment discrimination cases.

Deidre Baumann Law Offices

Michael Null and Associates
• Associate (1993-1996)

Notable: Baumann ran unsuccessfully for judge in 2010, 2012, 2016, and 2020. In 2003, a federal judge sanctioned Baumann and her former law partner in a case, saying they had failed to appear in court several times and delayed the case for three years. In 2009, Baumann represented families of people buried at Burr Oak Cemetery, a historically Black cemetery in Alsip, in a class-action lawsuit where workers had allegedly emptied graves in an attempt to resell the plots. The lawsuit was settled, but because the cemetery had filed for bankruptcy, most families received very little compensation. Baumann did not respond to a request for comment.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or above by most bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association rated her not qualified, and the Chicago Bar Association rated her not recommended.

Endorsements: IVI-IPO, Personal PAC

Paul Joyce

Experience:
Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
• Assistant state’s attorney (1999-present): Has worked in bond court and felony review, and as a prosecutor on felony cases. Currently works at the Skokie courthouse.

Notable: Joyce does not have an active campaign committee or website.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by eight bar associations and highly recommended by the Decalogue Society of Lawyers. Others were not available by press time.

Michael Weaver

Experience:
McDermott Will & Emery
• Partner and associate (2007-present): Currently oversees the firm’s pro bono practice. Previously represented large companies, including Honeywell, in asbestos lawsuits.

High Court of American Samoa

Notable: Weaver applied to be an associate judge in 2021 but was not selected.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or above by all. Chicago’s LGBTQ+ Bar Association rated him highly recommended.

Endorsements: CFL, Personal PAC

Ruth Isabel Gudino

Experience:
Cook County Circuit Court
• Circuit judge (2021-present): Appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court. Currently hears traffic cases at the Richard J. Daley Center.

Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
• Assistant state’s attorney (1997-2001; 2003-2021): Has served in many roles in the office, including supervisor of criminal prosecutions in Maywood, supervisor of the juvenile justice division, and director of legal hiring and recruitment.

United Auto Workers-GM Legal Services Plan
• Staff attorney (2001-2003): Worked on small claims, probate, real estate, and breach of contract cases for Ford and General Motors union employees.

Cook County Public Guardian’s Office
• Assistant public guardian (1995-1997)

Notable: Gudino was a finalist for associate judge in 2019 but was not selected. Gudino’s largest outside campaign donor is Monterrey Security Consultants, a politically connected private security firm that has faced allegations in Illinois and Minnesota of failing to comply with state regulations. Gudino did not respond to a request for comment.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or above by all and highly qualified or highly recommended by three bar associations.

Endorsements: CFL, Personal PAC

Chelsey Renece Robinson

Experience:
Owens and Robinson
• Founding partner (1996–present): Private practice focused on family law, criminal defense, bankruptcy, and real estate.

Notable: Robinson is a legal consultant for the “Judge Mathis” show. She ran unsuccessfully for judge in 2016 and 2020.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or above by most bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association rated her not qualified.

Endorsements: IVI-IPO

Candidate profiles for the O’Brien vacancy continue on the next page.
Jacqueline Marie Griffin

**Experience:**
Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
- Assistant state’s attorney (2005-present): Prosecuted child support, child abuse, and juvenile delinquency cases. Has prosecuted felony criminal cases since 2012, with a focus on sexual assault and domestic violence cases since 2017.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or above by 11 bar associations.

**Notable:** Griffin ran unsuccessfully for judge in 2020. Her father and two uncles were Chicago police officers.

**Endorsements:** Cair, CA, Inc.

Dan Balanoff

**Experience:**
Balanoff and Associates

**Notable:** Balanoff is part of a progressive political family from Chicago’s Southeast Side with roots in the labor movement. His father is Cook County Circuit Judge Robert Balanoff and his grandmother Miriam Balanoff is a former Cook County circuit court judge and state representative. His uncle, Clem Balanoff, is a former state representative and political consultant, and his father’s first cousin is Tom Balanoff, who recently retired after a lengthy tenure as president of SEIU Local 1.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated not qualified or not recommended by seven bar associations. Three bar associations found him recommended. Others were not available by press time.

**Endorsements:** IVI-IPO, Personal PAC

Claudia Silva-Hernandez

**Experience:**
Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County
- Illinois Department of Human Services
  - Administrative law judge (2019-2021): Heard appeals of decisions to terminate state and federal benefits, such as food stamps and child care subsidies.
- Solo practitioner
  - Contract attorney (2017-2019): Assisted with discovery requests for cases involving white collar crimes.

**Independent Police Review Authority**
- Staff attorney (2016-2017): Provided legal analysis for investigations into alleged misconduct by Chicago police officers.
- Chicago Housing Authority
  - Contract attorney (2012-2016): Represented the CHA in administrative hearings about the termination of housing vouchers.
- Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission
  - Litigation counsel (2008-2011)
  - Will County Public Defender’s Office
  - Assistant public defender (2007-2008)

**Bar association ratings:** Did not participate in the evaluation process.

**Endorsements:** CFL

Meridith Vanae Hammer

**Experience:**
The Hammer Legal Group
- CEO (2009-present): Private practice focused on real estate transactions, zoning issues, trusts, and estate planning. Served as an administrative law judge for the City of Indianapolis’ code enforcement department.
- Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County
  - Deputy general counsel (2019-2021): Provided legal counsel, reviewed outside contracts, and managed outside counsel in employment cases.
- Crossozont Community Development Corp.
- CA, Inc.
  - Senior contracts manager and operations manager (2005-2009): Drafted and reviewed contracts for a software company.

**Notable:** Hammer ran for Cook County commissioner in 2018. She lost in the primary to Commissioner Stanley Moore.

**Bar association ratings:** Did not participate in the evaluation process.

Claude More Donnelly

**Experience:**
Cook County Circuit Court
- Circuit judge (2021-present): Appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court in December 2021. Presides over jury trials in wrongful death, police shooting, medical malpractice, and product liability cases.
- Associate judge (2003-2021): Heard a variety of cases, including domestic violence, consumer debt, and felony and misdemeanor criminal cases. Presided over civil jury trials.

**Cook County Public Defender’s Office**
- Assistant public defender (1988-1999)

**Notable:** Donnelly first ran for circuit judge in 2000, but lost to Matthew Coghlan. In 2011, Donnelly threw out the arrests of 92 Occupy Chicago protesters who violated the city’s curfew by camping out in Grant Park. Donnelly said in his decision that the curfew ordinance was unconstitutional because the city selectively enforced the curfew. But the Illinois Appellate Court overturned his decision in a judgment later affirmed by the Illinois Supreme Court. Since 2016, Donnelly has been a board member of the Illinois Judicial College, which trains judges and staff across the state. Many of Donnelly’s largest donors are personal injury law firms and lawyers, whose cases could come before him in the law division. In an email, Donnelly said, “As a judicial candidate I am not allowed to solicit campaign contributions. My committee handles fundraising matters and abides by all campaign finance rules and safeguards.”

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or recommended by five bar associations and highly recommended by three. Others were not available.

**Endorsements:** CFL, IVI-IPO, Personal PAC

Maria M. Barlow

**Experience:**
The Barlow Law Firm LLC
- Principal attorney (2011-present): Primarily focused on family law and estate planning.
- City of Chicago Law Department
  - Assistant corporation counsel (2008-2011): Prosecuted various types of cases, including traffic tickets and building code violations.

**Notable:** Barlow ran for Cook County commissioner in the 4th district in 2018. She lost in the primary to Commissioner Stanley Moore.

**Bar association ratings:** Did not participate in the evaluation process.

John W. Wilson

**Experience:**
Cook County Circuit Court
- Circuit judge (2021-present): Appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court. Serves in the 4th municipal district at the Maywood courthouse.
- Cook County Public Defender’s Office
  - Assistant public defender (1997-2021): Served in numerous roles, including acting chief of the 6th municipal district (Markham) and homicide and felony supervisor in Markham. Also served on the homicide task force, a special division representing people accused of murder.

**Notable:** Before becoming a lawyer, Wilson was an administrator at City Colleges of Chicago and an assistant men’s basketball coach at Wilbur Wright College. Some of Wilson’s top donors include 4th Ward Ald. Sophia King; her husband, attorney Alan King; and his house music group, the Chosen Few DJs.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or above by all and highly qualified or highly recommended by three bar associations.

**Endorsements:** CFL, IVI-IPO, Personal PAC
Jerry Barrido

Experience:
Cook County Public Defender’s Office
• Assistant public defender (2000-present): Since 2019, represents defendants in felony cases at the Maywood courthouse. Before that, was a senior attorney handling hearings about transferring young people accused of serious crimes to adult court. Has also worked in the traffic division, juvenile justice division and forensic science division.

Notable: Barrido ran unsuccessfully for judge in 2018. He told Wednesday Journal in March that he deliberately chose to run in the Rogers vacancy because he wanted to challenge ShawnTe Raines-Welch, whose husband is Illinois House Speaker Emanuel “Chris” Welch. “I deliberately wanted to give the people a choice as to whether or not they wanted to go with the status quo Democratic politics or to have someone who is a fighter in the courtroom, who has a reputation as a zealous advocate and a hard worker period,” Barrido said.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations.

Endorsements: IVI-IPO

Chloe Georgianna Pedersen

Experience:
Fletcher & Sippel, LLC
• Partner (2019-present): Leads the firm’s labor and employment law practice.
• Associate (2014-2019): Represented railroads and other transportation companies on labor and regulatory issues.

Notable: Pedersen is the niece of Cook County Clerk Karen Yarbrough. When Yarbrough hired Pedersen in 2012 as the chief legal counsel for the Cook County Recorder of Deeds Office, the county’s inspector general said it violated the Cook County ethics code and asked Yarbrough to fire her, the Better Government Association and FOX 32 Chicago reported. In a statement, Pedersen said her hiring was vetted and approved by both the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office and the court-appointed monitors assigned to review hiring practices. “I was uniquely qualified to help the recorder with her transition given my background in civil rights, labor and employment issues, and coming from the Illinois Attorney General’s Office where I had previously worked with the same labor organization,” she wrote.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations whose ratings were available by press time.

ShawnTe Raines-Welch

Experience:
Ancel Glick
• Partner (2019-present): Represents various suburban municipalities and a school district as general counsel. Also presides over traffic hearings and other administrative hearings for towns including Markham and Blue Island.
Sanchez, Daniels and Hoffman, LLC
• Associate (2011-2019): Defended municipalities and school districts in civil rights and employment lawsuits.

Notable: Raines-Welch applied to be an associate judge in 2021 but was not selected. Her husband is Illinois House Speaker Emanuel “Chris” Welch. Raines-Welch has received large campaign contributions from labor groups, including LIUNA Chicago Laborers’ District Council PAC and Chicago Land Operators Joint Labor-Management PAC; politicians, including state Rep. Marcus C. Evans Jr. and House Majority Leader Greg Harris; and corporations, including MuniBuy LLC, which buys and securitizes revenue streams from various municipalities in Illinois.
Raines-Welch’s current municipal clients include Dolton and Calumet City. She has faced accusations in both suburbs of protecting the mayors over the interests of the trustees and towns. Raines-Welch and her campaign did not respond to requests for comment.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or above by 10 bar associations. The Illinois State Bar Association found her not qualified.

Endorsements: CFL, Personal PAC

Patrick Campanelli

Experience:
Patrick Campanelli, Attorney at Law P.C.
Attorney in private practice (1986–present): Focused on criminal defense, traffic, and personal injury cases.

Notable: Campanelli is married to former Cook County Public Defender Amy Campanelli. He ran unsuccessfully for judge in 1996 as a Republican.

Bar association ratings: Rated not qualified or not recommended by five bar associations. The Chicago Bar Association rated him qualified. Others were not available by press time.

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Timothy W. Wright, III

Experience:
Quintairos, Prieto, Wood & Boyer
- Gonzalez, Saggio & Harlan
  - Burris, Wright, Slaughter & Tom

Television station WJYS
- Business and Professional People for the Public Interest
  - Attorney (1983-1985): Represented residents in the landmark Gautreaux case that challenged the racial segregation of Chicago's public housing.

Notable: Wright was a finalist for associate judge in 2021 but was not selected. In addition to his legal work, Wright was involved in politics in the 1980s and 1990s. He held director roles for the City of Chicago under mayors Harold Washington and Eugene Sawyer, was a domestic policy advisor for President Bill Clinton, and was chief of staff for U.S. Rep. Bobby Rush. In 2009, Wright represented Roland Burris, whose son was his former law partner, in matters involving his appointment to Barack Obama's Senate seat by Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who was soon after indicted on corruption charges.

From 2001 to 2014, the IRS filed six liens against Wright’s home for nonpayment of nearly $600,000 in taxes. In an interview, Wright said that those liens occurred while he was working outside the country and that he has since cleared his debts. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, Wright was director of the Southern African Economic Development Fund for the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago and chairman of the Sub-Saharan African Advisory Committee of the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations.

Endorsements: CFL, IVI-IPO, Personal PAC

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the program was a success and the review by Chicago Apple
in the courtroom and questioned the program's efficacy. In
separate outside reviews accused her of "bullying" behavior
ment on the bench. In 2018, Injustice Watch reported that
"Would I do this again? Probably not. But her behavior has
this community who were raised with that. And my nephew,
intended for my grandniece, but there were a lot of people in
who didn't understand the tough love mentality that was
asked her to put her in the holding cell. "There are some
holding cell for about 10 minutes. In an interview with
video locking her 6-year-old grandniece alone in a courtroom
istrative duty in February 2020 after she was captured on
reviewed felony arrests.

Notable: Portman-Brown lost her judgeship in 2020 after
voters did not retain her for another term. She is one of just
two Cook County judges who have not been retained in the
past three decades. Portman-Brown was placed on administra-
tive duty in February 2020 after she was captured on
video locking her 6-year-old grandniece alone in a courtroom
holding cell for about 10 minutes. In an interview with
Injustice Watch, Portman-Brown said the girl’s mother
asked her to put her in the holding cell. “There are some
who didn’t understand the tough love mentality that was
intended for my grandniece, but there were a lot of people in
this community who were raised with that. And my nephew,
whose daughter it is, understood that,” Portman-Brown said.
“Would I do this again? Probably not. But her behavior has
been improved since this incident.”

Portman-Brown has proclaimed herself a "lock 'em up" judge
in media interviews and faced criticism for her tempera-
ment on the bench. In 2018, Injustice Watch reported that
the HOPE court program she ran was shut down after two
separate outside reviews accused her of "bullying" behavior
in the courtroom and questioned the program’s efficacy. In
an emailed response to Injustice Watch, Portman-Brown said
the program was a success and the review by Chicago Apple-
seed Fund for Justice mischaracterized the comments of the
HOPE court team. “I am demanding of everybody including
myself because the most important part is that we are all
working toward the defendant’s success and the program’s
success.”

Bar association ratings: Rated not qualified or not recom-
ended by 8/13 bar associations.

Jackie Marie Portman-Brown

Experience:
Cook County Circuit Court
• Oversaw deferred prosecution programs and the HOPE court, a specialty court
meant to keep struggling probationers out of prison.

Independent Police Review Authority
• Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
• Assistant state’s attorney (1998-2005): Prosecuted child sexual abuse, narcotics, and misdemeanor cases. Also
reviewed felony arrests.

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evoters did not retain her for another term. She is one of just
two Cook County judges who have not been retained in the
past three decades. Portman-Brown was placed on administra-
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seed Fund for Justice mischaracterized the comments of the
HOPE court team. “I am demanding of everybody including
myself because the most important part is that we are all
working toward the defendant’s success and the program’s
success.”

Bar association ratings: Rated not qualified or not recom-
ended by 8/13 bar associations.

David S. Rodriguez

Experience:
Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County
• Deputy general counsel (2020-present): Advising the clerk on policy and legal matters.
• Rodriguez Law Group P.C.
• Attorney in private practice (2006-2020): Focused on a variety of cases, including contract disputes, family law, and real estate
transactions.

State of Illinois Court of Claims
• Commissioner (2011-2017): Served as a part-time hearing officer for cases where people made claims of monetary damages or injury against the state.
• Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation
• Deputy director of banking (1999-2006): Devised and handled banking policy.

Notable: Rodriguez ran unsuccessfully for Illinois Senate in 1998. He filed to run for judge in 2020, but did not get enough
signatures to make the ballot.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by all.

Endorsements: IVI-IPO

Kerrie Maloney Laytin

Experience:
Cook County Circuit Court
• Associate judge (2021-present): Hears traffic cases and landlord-tenant disputes in the Richard J. Daley Center.
• Circuit judge (2019-2020): Appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court. Heard traffic cases.
• Illinois Human Rights Commission
• Chief administrative law judge (2021): Heard cases of alleged discrimination under the Illinois Human Rights Act and supervised other administrative law judges.

City of Chicago Law Department
• Assistant corporation counsel and senior counsel (2002-2019): Represented the city in cases before state and federal appellate courts.
• Legal Assistance Foundation of Chicago (now Legal Aid Chicago)
• Staff attorney (2000-2002): Represented people who couldn’t afford an attorney in eviction, domestic violence, employment discrimination, public benefits, and other cases.
• U.S. Department of Justice
• Trial attorney, federal programs branch (1999-2000): Represented the government in cases challenging the constitutionality of statutes and administrative actions.

Notable: The Illinois Supreme Court appointed Laytin to the circuit court in 2019, but she lost when she ran for a permanent
seat in 2020. She was selected as an associate judge in 2021.

Laytin holds investments in several private companies, according to her financial disclosure forms, including Chicago restaurants
Giant and Chef’s Special Cocktail Bar.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by all.

Endorsements: CFL, Personal PAC

Marcia O’Brien Conway

Experience:
Conway Law Office
• Attorney in private practice (2020-present): Focused on real estate transactions.

Notable: Conway ran unsuccessfully for
judge in 2020.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or above by all. The Chicago Council of Lawyers rated her well qualified, and the Puerto Rican Bar Association of Illinois rated her highly recommended.

Endorsements: CFL, Personal PAC

Owens "Joe" Shelby

Experience:
Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
• Assistant state’s attorney (1994-2018): Represented the county in litigation over real estate tax issues and in real estate transactions and lease agreements.

Notable: Shelby ran unsuccessfully for
judge in 2014 and 2020.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations.

Endorsements: IVI-IPO
payment plan with both the IRS and Illinois. “I certainly did not intend to file inaccurate returns for those years,” he stated.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations.

**Endorsements:** IVI-IPO, Personal PAC

**John Fritchey**

**Experience:**
- **F4 Consulting Ltd.**
  - Government relations director (2008-present): Runs a lobbying and political consulting firm. Worked as a political analyst for radio station WGN.
- **Cook County Board of Commissioners**
- **Law Office of John A. Fritchey**
- **Illinois House of Representatives**

**Notable:** As a county commissioner, Fritchey was a staunch opponent of the penny-per-ounce “soda tax” and a proponent of marijuana legalization. Fritchey’s lobbying and consulting firm has represented several cannabis companies in zoning issues before the City of Chicago, and also represents the Pilsen Wellness Center, a mental health and substance use treatment facility. He is not currently registered as a lobbyist with Cook County or the state of Illinois.

In 2013, the Chicago Tribune reported that Fritchey was one of a handful of politicians and wealthy individuals who had gotten Cook County judges to protect their identities in divorce proceedings by allowing them to file paperwork with initials instead of their full names. In an email, Fritchey wrote, “Illinois law allows for absolutely anybody to request to file under initials but it’s likely not something that most people care to or choose to do…. I didn’t and don’t see any special treatment whatsoever.”

**Bar association ratings:** Rated not qualified or not recommended by four bar associations.

**Endorsements:** CFL, Personal PAC

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**Bradley R. Trowbridge**

**Experience:**
- **Law Offices of Bradley R. Trowbridge**
  - Attorney in private practice (2003-present): Practice focuses on family law, divorce, and domestic violence cases. Has also served as a Guardian ad Litem, or child representative, in family court.
- **Pro Bono Advocates**
  - Staff attorney (2003): Represented survivors of domestic violence in orders of protection and child custody cases.
- **Legal Assistance Foundation**

**Notable:** Trowbridge ran unsuccessfully for judge in 2012, 2018 and 2020. The IRS and the state of Illinois have filed liens against a property Trowbridge owns for nonpayment of more than $88,000 in income taxes from 2008 through 2015. Trowbridge wrote in an email to Injustice Watch that he is in a

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**Jennifer Bae**

**Experience:**
- **Cook County Sheriff’s Office**
  - Director of employee discipline (2019-present): Oversees employee discipline and represents the sheriff’s office in grievance and arbitration with union members.
  - Member, Sheriff’s Merit Board (2013-2017): Conducted disciplinary hearings for sworn members of the sheriff’s office and voted on disciplinary actions.
- **Chicago City Council**
  - Staff attorney, finance committee (2017-2019): Wrote and advised on city ordinances and policies introduced in the finance committee.
- **Law Office of Jennifer E. Bae**
  - **Bae Law Offices**
    - Partner (2000-2012): Focused on criminal defense and civil rights law.
- **Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office**
  - Assistant state’s attorney (1997-2000)

**Notable:** Bae ran unsuccessfully for judge in the 12th subcircuit in 2016. If elected, Bae said she would be the first Korean American female judge in Cook County.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations.

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**Stephen Swedlow**

**Experience:**
- **Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan, LLP**
  - Co-managing partner (2012-present): Leads the Chicago office of a large international law firm. Represents both companies and consumers in civil and class-action lawsuits.
- **Korein Tillery**
  - Partner (2008-2011): Focused on intellectual property, class action, and civil lawsuits.
  - **Swedlow & Associates**
    - Partner (2004-2008): Represented plaintiffs in class-action lawsuits against pharmaceutical companies, chemical companies, and consumer goods companies.
- **Latham & Watkins**
  - Associate (1996-2001)

**Notable:** Swedlow represented health insurance companies in a class-action lawsuit filed in 2016 against the federal government over unpaid fees related to the Affordable Care Act. The government was ordered to pay $3.7 billion, and Swedlow’s firm was awarded $185 million in legal fees. Swedlow won a $10.1 billion verdict in a class-action lawsuit against Philip Morris International in 2003. It was the largest civil judgment in Illinois at the time, but the judgment was overturned by the Illinois Supreme Court.

Swedlow currently represents plaintiffs in class-action lawsuits against Facebook and Amazon over alleged privacy violations. Early in his career, Swedlow represented plaintiffs pro bono in a civil lawsuit against Matthew Hale and his white supremacist, neo-Nazi organization World Church of the Creator, after one of Hale’s followers killed two people, including Northwestern University basketball coach Ricky Byrdsong, and injured nine others during a shooting spree. As of May 12, Swedlow had loaned his campaign fund $500,000, which is a notably large sum for a subcircuit race and nearly seven times as much as his competitor had raised.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or above by all and highly qualified or recommended by three bar associations.

**Endorsements:** Personal PAC

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Expanded coverage

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decision was upheld by the Illinois Appellate Court and Illinois Su-
ruled that the contract provision violated the state's Freedom
that requires those files to be destroyed after five years. Tailor
complaint files, despite a provision in the police union contract
longstanding dispute with the city's main police union over the
 Assessor Joseph Berrios challenging a county ordinance that lim-
preme Court. In 2018, he dismissed a lawsuit by then-Cook County
officers from the public.
The appellate court also upheld that decision. In 2019, Tailor ruled
people who had sought "official action" from those same officials.

Notable: In 2017, Tailor ruled in favor of the City of Chicago in a
longstanding dispute with the city’s main police union over the
city’s decision to maintain decades’ worth of police misconduct
complaint files, despite a provision in the police union contract
that requires those files to be destroyed after five years. Tailor
ruled that the contract provision violated the state’s Freedom
of Information Act and the public’s interest in disclosure. That
decision was upheld by the Illinois Appellate Court and Illinois Su-
preme Court. In 2018, he dismissed a lawsuit by then-Cook County
Assessor Joseph Berrios challenging a county ordinance that lim-
ited the amount of campaign contributions to elected officials from
people who had sought "official action" from those same officials.
The appellate court also upheld that decision. In 2019, Tailor ruled
in a case brought by Injustice Watch co-founder Rob Warden that
the Chicago Police Department could not withhold photos of police
officers from the public.

Bar association ratings:Rated qualified or above by all and highly
qualified or highly recommended by six bar associations.
Endorsements:CFL, IVI-IPO, Personal PAC

Ann Buran-Vongher

Experience:
Cook County Public Defender’s Office
• Assistant public defender (1989-2020): Represented clients in misdemeanor and
felony cases and juvenile court.
Bar association ratings:Rated qualified or
recommended by six bar associations. The
Illinois State Bar Association rated her not
qualified. Other evaluations were not available by press time.

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report you can take to your polling station, scan the QR code or visit www.injusticewatch.org/judges.

Barry Goldberg

Experience:
Office of the Illinois Attorney General
• Bureau chief, Charitable Trust bureau (2019-present): Brings
civil and criminal cases against
nonprofits and executives accused
of fraud, misuse of funds and other
violations of state law.
• Deputy bureau chief, Charitable Trust bureau (2018-
2019).
• Assistant bureau chief, Charitable Trust bureau
• Assistant attorney general, Charitable Trust bureau
(1999-2006).
Bar association ratings:Rated qualified or
recommended by eight bar associations and highly
recommended by the Decalogue Society of Chicago.
Other evaluations were not available by press time.
Endorsements:CFL, IVI-IPO, Personal PAC

Don R. Sampen

Experience:
Clausen Miller, P.C.
• Partner (2008-present): Focused on
commercial litigation and appeals.
Meckler Bulger and Tilsen
• Partner (2003-2008): Focused on
insurance coverage and commercial
litigation.
Office of the Illinois Attorney General
• Chief, Public Interest and Special Litigation divisions
(2000-2003): Worked on special litigation, includ-
ing a nationwide lawsuit against several tobacco
companies.
• Assistant attorney general (1995-2000)
Martin, Craig, Chester & Sonnenschein
• Partner (1988-1995): Mostly focused on commercial
litigation.
Bar association ratings:Rated qualified or above by
all. The Chicago Council of Lawyers rated him well
qualified, and Chicago’s LGBTQ+ Bar Association rated
him highly recommended.
Endorsements:Personal PAC
Chris Taliaferro

**Experience:**
- Taliaferro Law Group
  - Attorney in private practice (2016-present): Focused on divorce, child support, estate planning, and other domestic relations cases.
- Chicago City Council
  - Alderperson, 29th Ward (2015-present): Represents parts of the Austin, Belmont Cragin and Montclare neighborhoods on the city’s West Side.
- Nexus Legal Group
  - Attorney in private practice (2008-2016): Focused on divorce, child support, estate planning, and other domestic relations cases.
- Chicago Police Department

**Notable:** Taliaferro served in the U.S. Marine Corps before becoming a police officer. As an investigator in the Chicago Police Department’s internal affairs unit in 2005, Taliaferro wrote a memo to department higher-ups about the high number of complaints against officers in the Special Operations Section, the Chicago Tribune reported. Several members of that unit later faced federal charges for stealing drugs and money from people they falsely arrested.

Taliaferro has been a reliable pro-police voice since joining the City Council. In 2019, Mayor Lori Lightfoot made Taliaferro the council’s public safety committee chair. Since then, he has supported the mayor’s version of an ordinance creating a new police oversight body and stalled attempts by fellow alderpeople to hold a hearing to question Police Superintendent David Brown about plans to address gun violence last summer. In an interview, Taliaferro said he has supported police accountability efforts and does not always see eye-to-eye with the police department or unions. “I do love our police department and I love our police officers,” he said. “But my voting record has always been what I thought was best for our city and my ward. And because of that, I’ve lost the support of the Fraternal Order of Police and the sergeants’ union.”

**Bar association ratings:** Recommended by four bar associations and not recommended or not qualified by four. Other evaluations were not available by press time.

**Endorsements:** CFL

Aileen Bhandari

**Experience:**
- Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
  - Supervisor, Community Justice Centers (2021-present): Oversees four neighborhood-based offices that prosecute criminal cases and support community outreach and crime prevention.
  - Assistant state’s attorney (2002-2019): Held various roles, including overseeing the Community Justice Center in the Austin neighborhood, prosecuting felony criminal cases, and working in the office’s grand jury and felony review units.

**Notable:** Bhandari ran unsuccessfully for judge in 2020. She was also a finalist for associate judge in 2019.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or above by all and highly recommended by Chicago’s LGBTQ+ Bar Association and the Puerto Rican Bar Association of Illinois.

**Endorsements:** IVI-IPO

Christine Svenson

**Experience:**
- Svenson Law Offices
  - Principal (2008-present): Focused on employment law, election law, and family law.
- Cook County Republican Party
- Stone & Moore, Chartered
  - Partner and associate (1998-2008): Focused on workers’ compensation cases.

**Notable:** Svenson ran unsuccessfully for judge in 2018. In 2014, she represented a client who filed a lawsuit alleging sexual harassment against Dan Rutherford, then the Illinois state treasurer and a Republican candidate for governor. Rutherford accused Svenson and her client of fabricating the allegations to help his primary opponent, Bruce Rauner. Svenson denied political motivations. She said she approved the documents for unrelated legal work.

Svenson has worked on several cases with Judicial Watch, a conservative legal group. In a 2015 case, Svenson represented a client who filed a lawsuit asking the court to force Cook County’s cooperation with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detainer requests, which ask local jails to hold people who immigration officials suspect are in the country illegally. The county had passed a 2011 ordinance ordering the sheriff not to comply. A Cook County judge dismissed the lawsuit, and the Illinois Appellate Court later dismissed an appeal filed by Svenson, saying the case briefs submitted on her client’s behalf were “completely deficient.” In an emailed statement, Svenson said she had approved the documents but did not write them. She disagreed with the appellate court’s assessment, writing, “Our brief was not deficient at all.”

Svenson represents a reporter with the conservative news outlet The Daily Caller in a pending lawsuit against Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot, claiming she violated the First Amendment in May 2021 when she granted interviews only to reporters of color to mark the midpoint of her first term.

Gary William Seyring

**Experience:**
- Law Offices of Gary W. Seyring
  - Attorney in private practice (2010-present): Focused on real estate, contract disputes, domestic relations, contested estates, and personal injury cases.

**Notable:** Seyring is running for judge in the 13th subcircuit for the fifth time. He lost in the Republican primary in 2014 and 2016, and lost in the general election in 2018 and 2020. In addition to his law practice, he also has served as an arbitrator with the Cook County Arbitration Program. Before becoming a lawyer, Seyring was an accountant for several years.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations.

Dominic J Buttitta, Jr

**Experience:**
- Buttita Law Group, LLC
- Carponelli & Buttitta, LLC
- McHenry County State’s Attorney’s Office
  - Assistant state’s attorney (2010-2013): Held various roles, including prosecuting misdemeanor and traffic cases, felony cases, white collar crimes, and mental health court cases.

**Bar association ratings:** Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations that were available by press time.

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James “Jack” Costello

Experience:
- Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office
  • Assistant state’s attorney (2007-present): Since 2019, has prosecuted public corruption and financial crimes cases. Previously prosecuted felony, misdemeanor and traffic cases, and worked in the felony review unit.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations that were available by press time.

Endorsements: CFL, Personal PAC

Joe Gump

Experience:
- Law Offices of Joseph M. Gump
  • Attorney in private practice (2020-present): Focused on real estate transactions and misdemeanor criminal cases.

Cook County Public Defender’s Office

Notable: Gump ran unsuccessfully for judge in 2020. His parents served time in federal prison in the 1980s for participating in anti-war protests that allegedly caused damage to federal property, which Gump has said inspired his career in public defense.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations.

Endorsements: IVI-IPO, Personal PAC

14TH SUBCIRCUIT

Brown Vacancy

Iris Y. Chavira

Chavira is running unopposed in this primary. For her full candidate profile, visit injusticewatch.org/judges.

Steve Demitro

Experience:
- Steve Demitro Law Office
  • Attorney in private practice (2000-present): Focuses on personal injury, wrongful death, and criminal cases. Also works as an arbitrator.

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District

Notable: Demitro dropped out of high school but later earned his GED diploma, went to law school, and passed the bar exam. He ran unsuccessfully for judge in 2012 and 2020.

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations.

Viviana Martinez

Experience:
- Chicago Public Schools
  • Deputy general counsel (2022-present): Works on contract negotiations, procurements, and legal compliance.

Cook County government
- Interim director, Department of Adoption and Family Supportive Services (2018-2019): Oversaw policy and training for the department responsible for social investigations of families involved in adoptions and parentage proceedings.
- Assistant special legal counsel, Office of Cook County President (2013-2018): Provided legal counsel to the office and various county departments.

Office of Cook County Commissioner Jesús “Chuy” García
- Chief of staff and general counsel

JAGIELSKI VACANCY

Jorge V. Cazares

Experience:
- Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP
  • Partner (2020-present): Wide-ranging practice, including contract and business law, product liability, and representing local governments in employment and civil rights cases.
- Pugh, Jones & Johnson, P.C.
  • Director (2008-2020): Practiced personal injury defense, civil rights and employment discrimination defense, and real estate and commercial law.
- Associate and partner (1992-2006)
- Chicago Housing Authority
  • General counsel (2006-2008): Oversaw all legal matters for the public housing agency, including real estate development, personal injury cases, and housing regulation issues. Also served as the agency’s chief ethics officer and chief equal employment opportunity officer.
- Exelon
  • Litigation counsel (2005): Temporarily served as in-house counsel.

Bar association ratings: Rated not qualified or not recommended by five bar associations.

15TH SUBCIRCUIT

Lawler Vacancy

Bernadette Barrett

Experience:
- The Barrett Law Group
  • Attorney in private practice (2019-present): Focused on family law and civil litigation.

Bar association ratings:
- Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations that were available by press time.

Endorsements: CFL, Personal PAC

Jim Gleffe

Experience:
- Cook County Clerk’s Office
  • Deputy chief of staff and labor counsel (2020-present): Represents the office in employment issues.

Cook County Recorder of Deeds Office
- Chief deputy recorder and chief of staff (2018-2020): Worked on labor issues, contracts, and legislative priorities for the office.

Chicago City Clerk’s Office

 Illinois Secretary of State’s Office
- Chief deputy director, securities division (2012-2013): Oversaw regulatory and enforcement cases involving the sale of securities.
- Enforcement attorney (2009-2012)

City of Chicago Law Department

Notable: Gleffe and his wife, Kristen Bauer, have close ties to former House Speaker Michael Madigan. Gleffe was a longtime precinct captain under Madigan in Chicago’s 13th Ward. Bauer is a registered lobbyist who has represented clients including ComEd, which is embroiled in a bribery scandal that led to Madigan’s indictment last year, and Green Thumb Industries, a cannabis company that was one of the first to receive licenses to grow medical marijuana in Illinois, according to the Chicago Tribune. In 2019, Gleffe was involved in efforts to challenge the ballot petitions of David Krupa, a college student who was running against 13th Ward Ald. Marty Quinn. Gleffe noted that he personally reviewed several dozen affidavits from residents who said they wanted to withdraw their signatures from Krupa’s nominating petitions. But the Quinn campaign collected far more affidavits than the number of signatures Krupa had collected, leading to questions about the veracity of the affidavits, the Chicago Tribune reported. In a statement, a spokesperson for his campaign said, “The role of a notary is only to verify that the person signing a document is who they say they are. ... Jim carried out his notary duties in full compliance with the law.”

Bar association ratings: Rated qualified or recommended by all bar associations. Two bar associations rated him recommended. The other evaluations were not available by press time.

Endorsements: CFL, Personal PAC
Injustice Watch is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news organization in Chicago. Our work focuses on justice and equity in the court system. This judicial election guide is the result of a year of extensive research and reporting about Cook County judicial candidates. We offer the guide as a resource to voters. We don’t make endorsements or recommendations.

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Research and reporting: Grace Asiegbu, Carlos Ballesteros, Maya Dukmasova, Emanuella Evans, Kelly Garcia, Chloe Hilles, Max Lubbers, Josh McGhee, Rita Oceguera, Amy Qin, and Aviva Waldman

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